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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

NVA/VC MILITARY ACTIVITIES DURING 1971-72

2 April 1971

PREPARED JOINTLY BY  
THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
AND THE DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
FOR THE WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTION GROUP

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NVA Military Activities During 1971-72

Introduction

The purpose of this memorandum is to assess, the logistic and manpower considerations likely to influence Hanoi's choice of military strategy over the next 18 months. The memorandum also estimates the logistic and manpower resources that the North Vietnamese would have to commit to support a variety of military options. These range from a low option which would be a continuation of the 1970 pattern -- protracted warfare, including occasional high points -- to a high option involving sustained offensive activities throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia. The analysis also considers three possible intermediate strategies. These are an offensive campaign confined to Military Region 1, a campaign confined to Cambodia, and, finally, offensive campaigns carried out simultaneously in Military Region 1 and Cambodia.

The methodology underlying this analysis involved estimating the manpower and logistic resources which the North Vietnamese would have to commit in support of a given strategic option. The resource commitments for each strategy were then compared with North Vietnamese logistic performance during the current dry season and with previous infiltration patterns. On the basis of these comparisons, estimates are made on the feasibility of each of the various strategic options being attained and, when applicable, the time required to do so.

The terms "protracted war", "high points" and "major" or "general offensive" are defined as follows:

Protracted war -- the level of activity in which the Communists were engaged in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos during 1970. This period was marked by the absence of multi-battalion attacks, a very limited number of battalion attacks, and periodic increases in harassment, attacks by fire, ground and ambush attacks, and terrorism.

High point -- an enemy term used to describe a period -- usually of short duration -- during which he intensifies or sharply increases his level of military activity. High points are characterized by widespread attacks against both military and civilian targets.

Major offensive -- a campaign involving multi-battalion attacking forces of two to five battalions fighting for a period of at least five to ten days in three or more simultaneous actions. The concept includes sufficient stockpiling to enable the offensives to be continued for longer periods if conditions warrant.

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I. Overview: March - October 1971

1. The Communists will not be in a position to mount a sustained countrywide main force military action in South Vietnam over the next six to nine months, although significant high points may occur in any of the military regions. The enemy forces in South Vietnam have been depleted over the past year by the deployment of some Main Force Units into Cambodia or Laos. For example, only 43 of the 93 battalions normally deployed in South Vietnam's Military Region (MR) 3 are now physically located there.

2. The predominant threat in MR 1 is from forces in the Lam Son 719 area of Laos and north of the DMZ area. The recent shift of 324B Division elements to the Lam Son 719 area of Laos has somewhat eased the threat of multi-battalion attack in Quang Tri. In the Front 4 area of operation, the recent move of the 4th Regiment to within 20 miles of Da Nang increased the threat to Da Nang and Hoi An.

3. The most significant Main Force threat the enemy poses in MR 2 is in the Central Highlands area of Pleiku and in Kontum Provinces. The enemy is apparently preparing to use two infantry regiments with associated artillery elements to conduct an attack against isolated ARVN positions in that area. Other significant force dispositions in the region consist of the 3rd Division with two subordinate regiments in Binh Dinh Province and six battalions in Binh Thuan Province. Both of these forces appear to be suffering from personnel and logistic shortages.

4. In MR 3, only 50% of the enemy combat personnel, excluding guerrillas, threatening the area are physically located within the country. In-country units have experienced great difficulty in establishing an offensive posture. The enemy has been forced to recombine, reconstitute, and downgrade Main Force regiments and battalions to Local Force Units, because of the lack of supplies, replacements, and materiel. While many of the units currently operating in Cambodia have the capability to deploy against targets within MR 3, they have been tied down by ARVN operation TOAN THANG 01/71

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and would not be available to protect base areas and LOCs in Cambodia if they returned to South Vietnam at this time.

5. Enemy forces in MR 4 have been seriously eroded during the past year, and have had difficulty in securing supplies. Unless personnel and supply losses can be made up in the next several months, the enemy's military capabilities there are unlikely to improve significantly during 1971.

6. The current enemy strength in Cambodia is estimated at 50,000 to 60,000 personnel (excluding 5,000 to 10,000 Khmer Communists). The dispositions of these enemy forces are mostly in the south and eastern third of the country. The major enemy threats in Cambodia are in three strategic areas. Approximately 15 battalions are deployed in the general vicinity of Route 4; 7 in the Kompong Thom-Skoun-Kompong Cham area, and 55 battalions in the northeast and TOAN THANG areas.

7. In South Vietnam we expect the Communists to continue the current spring campaign for a few weeks before settling into a rainy season that should be similar to those of the past two years. However, they could maintain a relatively high rate of terror, harassment, and small unit attacks into the rainy season. The exception here, as always, is northern MR 1 where because of short LOCs and a unique weather cycle -- the dry season runs from May through September -- Hanoi's capabilities are not governed by the same manpower and logistical constraints that pertain to the south. In Cambodia, Communist efforts over the next six to nine months will remain focused primarily on reconstituting and securing supply routes and base areas, just as they are in southern Laos. Stronger military action may also be initiated elsewhere in portions of Cambodia or Laos.

8. Hanoi's actions during the current winter/spring campaign have been limited. Manpower needed to be fed into the COSVN area (MRs 3 and 4 and Cambodia) to rebuild forces in order to maintain a credible military threat and to support the effort to build an expanded insurgency base and logistic system in Cambodia. Beyond that, the defense of

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the logistic system in Laos was the principal task. The bulk of the 35,000 personnel destined for COSVN were dispatched early in the 1970-71 infiltration cycle. The manpower requirements of Communist forces in Cambodia for reorientation of the supply system and for security apparently have been substantial. Few infiltrators have been detected being allocated to enemy units in MRs 3 and 4 despite the fact that the enemy's position in these MRs has continued to erode.

9. Clearly one of the primary manpower requirements during the 1970-71 dry season was seen by Hanoi to be the operation and defense of the Laos Panhandle supply system. From April 1970 to early 1971 some 20,000 personnel were sent to southern Laos. During February an additional 20,000 troops were deployed to the Lam Son 719 area from North and South Vietnam. The 35,000 personnel sent to the COSVN area plus the 40,000 deployed to the Laos Panhandle represent about 75% of the total detected manpower allocated to South Vietnam and southern Laos this dry season.

10. We cannot predict with any large degree of confidence what immediate course the enemy will follow with its forces currently deployed in the Tchepone area. Clearly personnel losses have been considerable and, although enemy forces maintained heavy pressure on ARVN forces as they withdrew from Laos, they are not expected to move on into South Vietnam in any significant numbers at this time. Most of the Communist units that participated in the defense against Lam Son 719 will need rest and to be refitted and are hardly in shape at this time to engage in major offensive activities against the present heavy concentrations of Allied forces in MR 1. Action has picked up in MR 1 but this is largely the work of units which were already deployed in the area and were not directly involved in the fighting in Laos.

11. As the rainy season in Laos really begins to set in, however, some of the enemy's forces now there are expected to redeploy to South Vietnam as well as North Vietnam. If Hanoi wishes to heat up the war with Main Force activity some of the sizable force now tied up in Laos could be deployed into MR 1. However, Allied forces should be able to contain even heavy attacks in this area.

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12. Given the enemy's already reduced capabilities, and the fact that the inputs of both supplies and manpower during this dry season were modest, heavy main force military pressure in MRS 2, 3, and 4 are not expected during the upcoming spring and summer months.

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## II. Logistic Performance 1971-72 Dry Season

### A. The Analytical Approach

#### The CIA View

Paragraphs 13-38 present the CIA methodologies and estimates of possible levels of NVA logistic performance during the 1971-72 dry season. The DIA view is presented in paragraphs 39-44.

13. The level of logistic activity in the Laos Panhandle during the 1971-72 dry season (October 1971-May 1972) will depend on a wide range of variables. These include the size of the forces deployed in southern Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia; the level of the US air effort and the degree of its effectiveness in interdicting the supply system; the extent of ground operations by RVNAF forces and by friendly guerrillas; and the choice of strategic and tactical options which Hanoi and Saigon may try to follow in the 12 months following the opening of the dry season.

14. The latter is a critical variable since it presumably will be a large factor in establishing the logistic target which the supply system in Laos will seek to attain during the next dry season. It is also the most difficult to come to grips with because it raises the fundamental question of the extent to which Hanoi's strategic and tactical options are circumscribed by logistic constraints. Given our lack of knowledge on what these targets are, it is impossible at this early date to project any meaningful quantification of what the actual level of logistic performance will be during the next dry season.

15. We can, however, compute with reasonable accuracy the logistic requirements which must be met to satisfy a broad range of strategic and tactical options, and on the basis of previously observed performance, we can assess the capability of the system to meet these requirements. Using this approach, we analyze in this section the logistic requirements ranging from a minimum required to keep

the war going at the low levels of 1970 to the maximum required to obtain a capability for a sustained and widespread military offensive. We then, on the basis of assumed alternative levels of air interdiction, assess the extent to which the system is likely to meet these varying requirements for the 1971-72 dry season.

B. The Minimum Goal

16. In this discussion we assume that Hanoi has set as its minimum goal a logistic performance adequate to enable the war in South Vietnam and Cambodia to continue at the low levels of protracted warfare observed over the past 18 months. To meet this minimum goal, the North Vietnamese must provide sufficient input along the entry routes from North Vietnam into Laos to reestablish depleted stockpiles, to meet the requirements of its forces in southern Laos, to offset supply losses resulting from interdiction, and to provide an adequate throughput of supplies for its forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Southern Laos

17. In an earlier analysis of the logistic flows through southern Laos during the 1970-71 dry season, the normal flow of supplies was estimated to require a daily input from North Vietnam into southern Laos of 224 tons a day. It was further estimated that the need to replace the loss of Sihanoukville as well as the expansion of logistic and security forces required to maintain and defend the logistic system increased the minimum required daily input of supplies to 278 tons a day. For this analysis we now assume that the higher input requirement has in effect become the normal burden imposed on the system -- first, because the Communists are still denied access to Sihanoukville and, second, there is no evidence to warrant a judgment that Hanoi would feel able in late 1971 to maintain a smaller force in southern Laos than it had there at the beginning of the 1970-71 dry season. This force is estimated at 80,000 troops.

18. In measuring the logistic flow for forces in southern Laos, we have assumed that by the end of this dry season Hanoi will probably withdraw the

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forces deployed to southern Laos in reaction to Lam Son 719. We have also assumed that Hanoi will not redeploy these forces at the start of the next dry season, preferring to keep them in southern North Vietnam or in South Vietnam so long as it perceives no immediate threat of a renewal of incursions of the scale of Lam Son 719.

19. These assumptions reduce somewhat the estimated burden imposed on the logistic system during the next dry season. The incremental consumption and ground losses of supplies by the forces committed against Lam Son 719, for example, would be equivalent to an added daily drawdown of 28 tons of supplies throughout the dry season. Simply maintaining these forces in southern Laos without their being committed to combat would increase the daily consumption in Laos by 15-20 tons a day.

#### South Vietnam and Cambodia

20. The minimum goal of sustaining the war at the low levels of 1970 assumes that enemy forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia will be kept at their mid-1970 level of about 220,000 troops, of which 50,000 - 60,000 were deployed in Cambodia.

#### Input Requirements

21. The forces in southern Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia would have a total daily requirement of 164 tons a day in the 1971-72 dry season and 114 tons a day during the wet season. If the North Vietnamese attempt to carry out a full year's re-supply of these forces during the 1971-72 dry season, the total daily input, including allowances for air and ground losses, would be 278 tons a day, as shown in the tabulation below:

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	Short Tons	
	<u>Daily</u>	<u>Cumulative Dry Season</u>
Requirement for forces in southern Laos		
1971/72 dry season	120	36,000
1972 wet season	70	10,500
Minimum requirement for forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia	44	20,100
<i>Total</i>		66,600
<i>Daily input requirement (66,600 ÷ 240)</i>		278

22. On the basis of past performance, this input requirement appears to be well within the capabilities of the North Vietnamese logistic system. We currently are estimating that during the 1970-71 dry season the Communists will have maintained a daily average input of 295-370 tons of supplies into the Laos Panhandle.\* If this level of input is sustained during the 1971-72 dry season, it would clearly be adequate for maintenance of combat activities at 1970 levels.

23. The lower input -- 295 tons a day -- would impose a much tighter condition on the North Vietnamese and quite possibly could enforce some further drawdowns on existing stockpiles to maintain the 1970 pace of the war. The higher input -- 370 tons a day -- would present a more comfortable position from Hanoi's point of view. It would, for example,

\* This estimate is based on the assumption that the additional burdens and disruptions imposed on the logistic system this year will cause the North Vietnamese to try to maintain a high level of input past the normal end of the dry season and through the month of May. If the monsoon rains appear early in the month, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain the flow of supplies at this level.

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provide Hanoi with more resources to support a somewhat broader range of strategic or tactical operations.

24. In neither case, however, should the gross difference between daily input represented by our performance figures of 295-370 tons a day and the input requirements shown in Table 1 be regarded as a residual throughput into South Vietnam or Cambodia. Part of the residual, of course, would be subjected to air interdiction as it moved through the Panhandle. An unknown share of the apparent input surplus, particularly at the higher level of 370 tons a day, would probably be used to expand stockpiles within southern Laos. Much would also depend on how much of the residual flow could actually be moved into South Vietnam and Cambodia and placed into forward supply caches by Rear Services Groups.

25. The problems of distribution to combat units from storage areas in South Vietnam and Cambodia have become increasingly complex. Enemy deliveries to combat units have been spotty for sometime because of Allied operations. Supply distribution has been disrupted and caches have been captured or destroyed. Improvements in RVNAF and FANK capabilities over the past year and an increase in their operations over the next year or so may further increase Communist distribution problems.

26. The extent to which the actual input of supplies during the next dry season influences Hanoi's capabilities and thus its choice of strategies for the 1971-72 period will also be affected by logistic performance during the coming wet season. The analysis just presented imposed a full year's logistic burden on an eight-month dry season. Throughput during the next wet season would reduce the required input during the next dry season or give the Communists more tactical flexibility by drawing on stockpiles to expand combat rates.

27. We estimate that with a major effort the Communists could continue to move supplies through the Laos Panhandle during the 1971 wet season. Depending on the length and severity of the monsoon rains, this throughput could range between 10% and 20% of normal dry season throughput, or from 1,200

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to 3,000 tons. This amount would be equivalent to from 30 to 70 days of supply requirements at 1970 combat levels.

C. The Maximum Goal

28. In this discussion we assume that Hanoi has set as its goal a buildup of stockpiles in South Vietnam and Cambodia sufficient to permit the launching of a sustained offensive in both countries.\* In addition, the discussion considers strategic variants which would involve general offensives of less universal proportions. The three other variants analyzed are offensives limited to:

- (a) Military Region 1;
- (b) Cambodia; and
- (c) Military Region 1 and Cambodia

The Logistic Burden

29. The following discussion outlines the logistic burden under each of the four strategic variants. The derivation of these factors is discussed in the Appendix. In each case the flow of supplies required to support forces in southern Laos is held at 1970-71 levels as discussed for the minimum case.

30. As shown in Table 1, the dry season input flows would range from a low of 293-301 tons in the case of an offensive limited to Cambodia,

\* For this analysis, stockpiling requirements are judged to be one and one-half times the average daily expenditures of externally procured supplies (Classes II, IV, and V for Cambodia and South Vietnam's MRs 1, 2, 3, 4 and Class I for South Vietnam's MR 1) during 1968 for a six-month period. This is thought to provide adequate supplies to sustain a continuation of low-level combat during the pre-offensive phase and to provide ample support for a major offensive. To this total was added a six month's resupply flow requirement of the low combat level of 1970 to round out the annual requirement for 1971-72.

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Table 1

1971/72 Dry Season Supply Flows Needed  
to Meet Requirements for Sustained Offensive  
Operations

	Short Tons	
	Daily Requirement	Cumulative Dry Season Inputs
<u>Southern Laos</u>		
1971/72 dry season	120	36,000
1972 wet season	70	10,500
<u>Case 1</u>		
Country-wide South Vietnam and Cambodia	73-90	33,187-40,950
<i>Total</i>		79,687-87,450 <u>a/</u>
Daily input require- ment		332-364 <u>b/</u>
<u>Case 2</u>		
Cambodia; low combat elsewhere	52-56	23,850-25,650
<i>Total</i>		70,350-72,150 <u>a/</u>
Daily input require- ment		293-301 <u>b/</u>
<u>Case 3</u>		
Military region 1, low combat elsewhere	58-68	26,437-30,825
<i>Total</i>		72,937-77,325 <u>a/</u>
Daily input require- ment		304-322 <u>b/</u>
<u>Case 4</u>		
Military region 1 and Cambodia, low combat elsewhere	67-80	30,487-36,675
<i>Total</i>		76,987-83,175 <u>a/</u>
Daily input require- ment		320-347 <u>b/</u>

a. Including southern Laos tonnages, above.

b. The daily input requirement is calculated on the basis of a 240 day dry season (October-May) and includes an allowance for air losses.

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to 332-364 tons in the case of an offensive mounted throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia.

31. Using the same technique as that presented in the analysis of the minimum goal, we will compare the input requirements of each variant with capabilities as measured by logistic performance during the 1970-71 dry season.

Case 1 -- Maximum Offensive

32. In this case a general offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia would require an average daily input of 332-364 tons during the 1971-72 dry season. On the basis of the 1970-71 dry season, we can anticipate that actual input will range between 295 and 370 tons a day. The low end of this range is so far short of required inputs that a general offensive of this magnitude would not seem feasible during the 1971-72 dry season. The requisite stockpiles would probably not be in place until the approach of the 1972-73 dry season (October 1972-May 1973).

33. On the other hand, if the higher range of estimated input -- 370 tons a day -- is achieved during the 1971-72 dry season then the logistic imperatives to enable a general offensive will be close to satisfaction some time toward the end of the season. Because the margin is narrow and because a reliable means of resupply during the rainy season would be less certain, the Communists would probably prefer to wait out the wet season before launching the offensive. Moreover, their problems in moving supplies from Laos and distributing them to combat units in South Vietnam and Cambodia would further complicate the launching of such a widespread offensive. Much will depend upon the impact of Allied operations in 1971-72 and the degree to which the Communists are determined to expand the war. Their prudence would be cast aside, however, if the developing situation in Cambodia or South Vietnam revealed opportunities which gave the promise of highly successful operations. There is a greater chance that the Communists would attempt one or more of the variants discussed below.



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The Intermediate Cases

34. The variants for less extensive offensives would require the following daily inputs during the 1971-72 dry season:

	<u>Short Tons</u>
Case 2 - Military Region 1	304-322
Case 3 - Cambodia	293-301
Case 4 - Military Region 1 and Cambodia	320-347

Intermediate Options

35. In these cases we assume that Hanoi will desire to undertake sustained heavy offensive activity in only one or more regions of South Vietnam and/or Cambodia. Analytically, the logistic flows required for these intermediate models have been constructed in the same manner as in the "maximum goal" strategy. For the region where a high level of offensive activity is postulated, the flow of supplies needed to establish stockpiles is calculated; elsewhere, the enemy requirements are based on the 1970 expenditure rates.

36. The input requirements of all of the three "intermediate" strategy options fall within the range of estimated 1970-71 dry season daily average input of 295-370 tons of supplies into the Laos Panhandle. At this level of input, particularly as we move away from the low end of the range, each of these strategies is more feasible.

37. The high range of the estimated input -- 370 tons a day -- is slightly above average daily input requirements for building up to a sustained high level of combat in Cambodia and MR 1; it is well above the requirements needed to build stockpiles for high combat in Cambodia or MR 1 separately. This suggests that the enemy, operating from the high end of the estimated input range, could probably undertake extended offensive actions in either Cambodia or MR 1 some time before the end of the

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1971-72 dry season provided that supplies reach the combat units concerned. This is particularly so in MR 1 where the Communists could concentrate the throughput of supplies on Routes 926 and 922 and quickly deploy the required forces. In the case of MR 1, general offensive activities could probably be undertaken early in the 1971-72 dry season because of its location. The time required to build stockpiles for both MR 1 and Cambodia would indicate that simultaneous offensives in both areas could probably not be undertaken until the end of the dry season, in which case the Communists might await the start of the 1972-73 dry season.

38. A somewhat different picture emerges if one considers the low end of the estimated input -- 295 tons per day. This amount would appear to be insufficient to undertake any of the "intermediate" strategies very early during the 1971-72 dry season. Again, MR 1 would be an exception for the reasons discussed above. The Cambodia strategy alone would appear to be feasible toward the end of the period, and somewhat sooner if stockpiles in Cambodia have not been seriously depleted.

DIA POSITION

39. DIA finds it difficult to work from an "input requirement" or a "supply flow" approach. As an alternative to that methodology, DIA first calculates enemy requirements to support combat activities in South Vietnam and Cambodia. These calculations are then compared with DIA estimates of supplies throughput to South Vietnam and Cambodia, estimates of supplies stockpiled in Laos for later throughput, and estimates of enemy input to the system at the Laos border. Thus an overall estimate of enemy logistic performance is achieved. The DIA estimates for October 1970 to October 1971 is set forth below:

DIA ESTIMATE

Period - 1 Oct 1970 - 1 Oct 1971

	Short Tons
Input	75,000-85,000 (80,000)
Throughput	10,000-13,000 (11,500)
Stockpile - Laos	
(for later throughput) a/	7,000-9,000 ( 8,000)
Requirements - RVN/CB	
(external from Laos) a/	16,000-18,000 (17,000)

a. Subject to additional ground/air interdiction.  
b. To conduct a protracted war of the type observed since 1 Oct 1970.

This estimate suggests the enemy is barely able to sustain the current level of effort.

40. It is unlikely that enemy logistic input effort will increase significantly during the 1971-72 period. The estimated input for 1970-71 is measurably higher than in any previous year. The toll the enemy would pay in consumption and losses to air and ground interdiction in Laos would increase sharply were the enemy to turn to daylight operations, increased road building, increased security troops, and increased wet season operations. Moreover, even though the enemy may calculate that during the 1971-72 period he will not have to contend with the losses of another Lam Son 719 operation, he must consider carefully the new vulnerabilities of his Laotian stockpiles. He might be able to stockpile the rough equivalent of his Lam Son losses but these would remain targets for RVNAF and allied air and ground operations.

41. In view of the air and ground interdiction of the supply system over the past year, the Communists have no assurance that they would be able to deliver sufficient supplies to their forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1971 to maintain the 1970 levels of combat. Although interdiction losses at the 1970-71 rate in Laos

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and consumption by enemy forces in Laos have been considered, the loss of supplies in South Vietnam and Cambodia and the problems of distribution to combat units from storage areas in Cambodia and South Vietnam further reduces the amount of supplies which these combat forces would actually receive. Enemy deliveries to combat units have been spotty for some time due to Allied operations. Supply distribution has been disrupted and caches have been captured or destroyed. Improvements in RVNAF and FANK capabilities over the past year and an increase in their operations over the next year or so would further increase Communist supply problems. Thus even at the projected supply inputs maintenance of the 1970 combat levels would become increasingly difficult by 1972.

42. In postulating possibly enemy courses of action for the period 1 October 1971 - 1 October 1972, four cases have been constructed. Enemy requirements in these situations have been developed and are compared with estimate of the expected enemy logistic performance.

CHART

<u>Action</u>	<u>Requirements Short Tons</u>
Case 1	21,000 -23,000
Case 2	17,000 -19,000
Case 3	18,000 -20,000
Case 4	19,500 -21,500

For computing logistical requirements for the four cases involving the General Offensive, DIA assumed the following:

CASE ONE: (TOTAL RVN AND CAMBODIA)

Nine to 15 combat battalions fighting simultaneously for at least five to ten days in Cambodia and each Military Region of the Republic.

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CASE TWO: (CAMBODIA ONLY)

Nine to 15 battalions fighting simultaneously for at least five to ten days in Cambodia with the RVN remaining at a low level.

CASE THREE: (GVN MR 1 ONLY)

Nine to 15 battalions fighting simultaneously for at least five to ten days in MR 1 with the rest of the RVN and Cambodia remaining at a low level.

CASE FOUR: (GVN MR 1 AND CAMBODIA)

Nine to 15 battalions fighting simultaneously for at least five to ten days in both Cambodia and GVN MR 1 with the rest of the Republic remaining at low level.

43. The added tonnage required represents primarily additional ammunition expenditures and food requirements. Ammunition requirements increase in proportion the number of engagements whereas food requirements are a function of the numbers of personnel involved and the location.

44. On balance, it can be seen that under the estimated conditions of supply the Communists probably would not be capable of Case 1, a general offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia. The risk of such an operation would not only involve a serious drawdown of supplies but also high losses. Thus, it would probably not be acceptable to them. Case 2 would at best be only marginally within his capability, but could be prohibited by losses to his stockpiles and supply movements through air and ground interdiction. Case 3 would appear feasible due to its location nearest the DMZ and his stockpiles in Laos. Case 4 would seriously tax his supply capabilities in 1971-72 and might be well beyond any action he might undertake in this time period.

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D. Levels of Air Interdiction

45. The previous analysis assumed that the level of air interdiction in southern Laos during the 1971-72 dry season would be the same as that maintained during the current dry season. If the US air effort during the 1971-72 dry season should be altered then we would have to make adjustments in our estimates of the constraints imposed by air interdiction upon the NVA logistic system. If, for example, the US air effort were reduced by 30% and the sortie mix remained essentially as it is under current programs, we would anticipate a proportionate and significant loosening of the logistic constraints the enemy experiences in southern Laos.

46. The effects of changing levels of air activity in southern Laos are currently being studied by a working group panel of the Vietnam Special Studies Group. When its work is completed, more specific analysis of the effects of a reduction in the US air effort will be possible.

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### III. Manpower Constraints

47. Even with the war at the low levels observed during 1970, the drain on Communist manpower has been substantial. Over the past few years, North Vietnam has had to bear an increasing share of manpower losses as Communist ability to recruit in South Vietnam declined to low levels. The manpower drain during 1968 and successive years was one of the principal determinants of Hanoi's electing to follow a course of protracted warfare. A reluctance to make continuing large inputs of power is reflected in statistics on infiltration arrivals in South Vietnam/Cambodia, which declined from about 250,000 in 1968 to 100,000 in 1969 and to only 55,000 in 1970. These declining inputs have brought about a steady erosion of NVA/VC combat forces in South Vietnam/Cambodia which totaled only 110,000-125,000 at the end of 1970.

48. If Hanoi chooses now to increase its offensive capabilities by the end of the 1971-72 dry season, its forces in South Vietnam will have to be augmented substantially. The estimated current disposition of NVA/VC combat forces and the increased force required to support the alternative offensive strategies are shown in Table 2.

49. The force augmentations shown in Table 2 reflect a strategy of offensive operations roughly akin to those observed during the Tet and May offensives in 1968. There are several favorable aspects about the actual pre-Tet manpower situation which will be difficult for the enemy to recreate. The buildup of the enemy combat force structure during 1967 was accomplished with South Vietnamese rural manpower recruited from territory not under South Vietnamese control. Similarly, the major part of the fighting during the 1968 campaign was undertaken by southern Main and Local Forces units. As these forces were drawn down by high losses, however, replacements were made by the infusion of NVA personnel. Given the current status of the enemy force structure, and the Communists' limited capability to recruit manpower from the largely GVN-controlled population, the enemy could only simulate a true pre-Tet manpower situation through large infusions of NVA personnel.

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50. As Table 2 shows, these augmentations range from 20,000 to prepare for general offensive campaigns in either MR 1 or Cambodia, to 40,000 for simultaneous offensives in both MR 1 and Cambodia, to 60,000 for Case 1 -- a general offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Table 2

Current Disposition and Estimated Combat Force Levels Required to Support Alternative Offensive Strategies a/

	Thousand				
	<u>May 1972</u>	<u>Case 1</u>	<u>Case 2</u>	<u>Case 3</u>	<u>Case 4</u>
MR 1	35	55	55	35	55
MR 2	23	33	23	23	23
MR 3	17	27	17	17	17
MR 4	15	20	15	15	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>175</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>155</i>

*a. Case 1, general offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia; Case 2, general offensive in Military Region 1; Case 3, general offensive in Cambodia; and Case 4, general offensive in Cambodia and Military Region 1.*

#### Case 1

51. An augmentation of 60,000 troops would be required for this strategy. Losses during 1970 were reported from the field as over 200,000, and if we accept them for analytical purposes then infiltration arrivals in South Vietnam would have to be on the order of 250,000-300,000 troops. We have estimated that since 1968 infiltration on the order of 100,000 troops a year would generally be adequate to maintain force levels. If a country-wide offensive were initiated, however, casualties would increase dramatically and infiltration requirements would undoubtedly soar as they did in 1968. Infiltration at such a rate would take a considerable period of time to organize and

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implement. Moreover, a manpower drain of this magnitude would draw deeply from North Vietnam's manpower pool, and severely strain the training capacity of the North Vietnamese armed forces, particularly if such training had not been proceeding apace, and contribute to further disruption of the North Vietnamese economy.

52. DIA believes that the enemy could increase his force structure by 60,000 with an infiltration arrival of approximately 125,000 to 150,000 personnel. This is based upon his current strategy of attempting to maintain his 1970 force structure with approximately 55,000 arrivals last year. The estimated decrease in his order of battle was about 20,000 (240,000-290,000 in December 1969 to 220,000-270,000 in December 1970). Adding his OB losses and infiltration, the enemy needed only about 75,000 arrivals to maintain his end 1969 level of forces. For lesser amounts of buildups, infiltration requirements would be reduced.

53. All of these factors plus the knowledge that a 1971-72 offensive of these dimensions would probably result in high casualties would give Hanoi much food for thought. Any decision to commit these forces would be reached not simply by considering numbers but by hard consideration of many other factors including the increasing social and psychological pressures that would ensue, balanced against the likely results of such action.

#### The Intermediate Cases

##### Case 2

54. The military options open to the enemy in MR 1 are unique in several ways. The proximity to North Vietnam, the relatively short distance to move supplies and personnel in short periods of time, and the capability to withdraw units back into North Vietnam for retrenchment safe from Allied ground forces give MR 1 a unique position.

55. For the purpose of this analysis, it is estimated that a strength augmentation of 20,000 would be necessary to mount a sustained offensive in MR 1. Assuming no logistical constraints and

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a low level of activity in the area over the next month or two, this increase could be achieved within a relatively short period. This number of personnel would not appear to create an inordinate strain on the infiltration system nor would it impose any serious drawdown on the manpower pool in North Vietnam. A key factor in assessing enemy options in MR 1 appears to be the current availability of units now in southern Laos used to counter the Lam Son 719 operation. Once they are refitted, approximately half of the 20,000-man augmentation could be deployed from enemy units currently in the Laos Panhandle into MR 1 within a week's time. The additional 10,000 combat personnel required to mount and sustain a high level of military activity would have to be infiltration personnel and at best could not be expected to be in an offensive position until mid-year.

#### Case 3

56. The buildup of a general offensive capability in Cambodia is also estimated to require a force augmentation of about 20,000 troops. The lateral redeployments of enemy units from adjacent military regions in South Vietnam does not seem a likely source of manpower for this strategy, because of the already weakened force structure in these areas. Thus the major source of manpower for troop augmentation in Cambodia would be from infiltration of units and filler personnel. Assuming a continuation of a low level of combat activity until such time that a force buildup can be implemented in Cambodia, it is estimated that some 50,000 infiltrators would have to be directed to Cambodia in order to result in an overall force strength of about 45,000. If force levels in South Vietnam are also maintained, infiltration arrivals through 1971 would have to be about 150,000. Although several regimental-sized units could be dispatched from southern Laos in a matter of weeks if Hanoi were willing to weaken its defenses there, it does not seem likely that overall requirements for a troop buildup in Cambodia could be met until early 1972.

#### Case 4

57. This variant considers the manpower requirements to sustain a general offensive capability

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in both MR 1 and Cambodia. The forces in each region would have to be augmented by 20,000 troops. Although enemy troop strength in MR 1 could be built up in a relatively short period, the necessary manpower inputs to permit simultaneous offensive operations in Cambodia would not appear to be possible until sometime early in 1972. This time would be required for a force buildup in Cambodia and, in addition, allow time to deploy replacement personnel to depleted units in the other areas of South Vietnam. The infiltration requirements for this option would be on the order of 180,000 personnel, of which 50,000 would be committed to Cambodia and the remaining 30,000 to MR 1. The deployment of sufficient troops to Cambodia and MR 1 in time to launch an offensive by early 1972 would be exceedingly difficult and would pose some strains on trained manpower reserves and training capabilities in North Vietnam through the remainder of this year.

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IV. Overview: October 1971 - October 1972

58. Our analysis to this point has focused on one of the prime factors that affects Communist military capabilities in South Vietnam and Cambodia -- Hanoi's ability to move men and supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. But we recognize that there are other equally important factors determining the Communists' capacity to fight.

59. The Communists are not likely to be able to fight -- nor are they likely to choose to fight -- simply at whatever level of intensity their logistic situation permits a year from now. This would, among other things, fly in the face of what we still believe to be basic Hanoi strategy -- to rely mainly on the staying power of its forces to outlast US patience with the war.

60. The North Vietnamese have relied heavily at times on the kind of strong military force that can be applied only by big units that require substantial logistics support. They still have many such units engaged in the fighting, but for the past two years, particularly in South Vietnam, the Communists have soft pedaled big-unit warfare. This kind of warfare is extremely expensive, and the chances of achieving significant gains are remote, given the current balance of forces. Moreover, the Communists' ability to sustain large-scale action in many areas has been degraded significantly since the loss of Sihanoukville. None of the evidence we now have in hand suggests they expect these obstacles to be overcome easily or soon.

61. Indeed, all the current evidence from South Vietnam suggests that the Communist forces have been told in no uncertain terms that they should not expect much more than brave words from higher authorities and that they cannot count on being bailed out by big units. In many ways the wheel has come full circle for the Communists in South Vietnam; they are back trying to fight what they call a "people's war." Its precepts include local initiative, self-sufficiency, economy-of-force military tactics, and heavy reliance on subversion and the organizational groundwork of an insurgency.

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62. The results of these low-profile tactics are likely to affect Communist capabilities to fight in South Vietnam next year, as well as their long-term prospects, at least as much as their ability to move men or supplies south. Indeed their need for supplies from North Vietnam could be reduced to some extent if they succeeded in living off the land and in obtaining supplies from South Vietnamese sources.

63. We are uncertain about South Vietnam's ability to cope with Communist terrorism, subversion, and political agitation over the long haul, nor can we be sure of how to measure the results of this sort of warfare at any given time. But the Communists probably are not confident of their long-term prospects either, and we doubt very much that they are doing well enough now to provide the essential underpinning for a successful return to main force warfare in South Vietnam in the next year or so, even if enough men and supplies can be moved south through the Laotian corridors. Nevertheless, Hanoi has other options. It could, for example, raise the level of military action significantly in the form of more frequent high points and more extensive small-unit actions. These would not require large inputs of supplies or manpower but would make the Communist military presence more visible. One can also easily conjure up a situation 12-18 months from now in which Hanoi has concluded that a strong attack, such as the offensive variants analyzed for MR 1 or Cambodia, would be worth the effort.

64. Whether Hanoi actually makes such efforts or whether it sticks to the lower profile tactics of most of the past two years will, of course, depend on other key variables not discussed in this memorandum. Elections in South Vietnam this year may have an important influence on Hanoi's tactics -- not just their outcome but how the elections are conducted and whether they prove a force for cohesiveness or for divisiveness among the South Vietnamese.

65. The elections in the United States will be a prime consideration in Hanoi as the Communists try to chart their course for 1972. Hanoi may well decide that it must make a major effort to undercut long-term US support for an anti-Communist regime in South Vietnam, either by trying to bring

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about changes in President Nixon's policies or by trying to make Vietnam a major liability for his administration in 1972. Thus, what the Communists set out to do next year is not likely to be governed rigidly by their raw capabilities to move supplies from North Vietnam. An equally important consideration could be a determination in Hanoi that it must do whatever possible to alter the impressions, if not the realities, of the current situation in South Vietnam by pumping in more North Vietnamese manpower and by ordering its forces to attack in whatever ways they can.

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### Conclusions

66. Logistic considerations during 1971-72 will still loom large in Hanoi's strategic planning. Even though the Communists' resupply capability is substantial, the strategic options which it will support are by no means unlimited. Moreover, there are a number of key factors other than the volume of supplies moved down the Ho Chi Minh Trail which Hanoi must weigh in making its decisions on future strategies. These include such issues as how much further Hanoi is willing to drawdown its manpower and how it assesses the likely results if the level of military action were raised significantly. The North Vietnamese must also continue to wrestle with the complications arising from the loss of their Cambodian sanctuaries and the need to reestablish viable supply corridors from the southern Panhandle of Laos to MRs 3 and 4. Finally, the deterioration of the Communist infrastructure in South Vietnam and the stronger position of the GVN are major constraints on Communist capabilities.

67. Viewed strictly from the point of view of North Vietnamese logistic capabilities, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the type of military action Hanoi might pursue over the next 18 months.\*

68. On the basis of its performance during the current dry season -- an average of 295-370 tons of supplies moved into the system daily -- the Laos supply system, by repeating this performance during the 1971-72 season, can continue to handle the volume of supplies needed to support the war at the protracted level observed during 1970. We estimate that support of the Communist forces in southern Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia during the 1971-72 period would require a daily input of 278 tons of supplies from North Vietnam. In the absence of operations similar to those of Lam Son 719, the logistic burden on the Laos system during the 1971-72 dry season would be less than it was during the current dry season.

\* DIA does not concur in those portions of these conclusions, and other portions of the paper that are based upon "input requirements." The DIA position appears on page 16 beginning at paragraph 39.

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69. The capabilities of the logistic system would be more taxed if it were called upon to support the various options for offensive campaigns analyzed in this study. These options require inputs of supplies from North Vietnam ranging from 293 to about 364 tons a day.

70. The option requiring the greatest inputs of supplies -- a major offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia -- would clearly not be feasible before the start of the 1972-73 dry season if inputs from North Vietnam are at the low end of the range -- 295 tons a day. On the other hand, if input were at the higher end of the range -- 370 tons a day -- the Communists could, from the logistic point of view, consider the possibility of a major offensive toward the end of the 1971-72 dry season.

71. We believe, however, that a number of constraints would cause them to avoid such an offensive. These constraints include the uncertainty of continued resupply during the wet season, the probability of extremely high casualties, the uncertainties of the results of such an offensive, and problems of distributing supplies within Cambodia and South Vietnam, particularly in the far reaches of MRs 3 and 4.

72. If Hanoi's plans were directed to the intermediate offensives analyzed in this memorandum -- MR 1 alone, Cambodia alone, or MR 1 and Cambodia combined -- the logistic constraints are relaxed considerably and the options are considerably wider.

73. If North Vietnam were able to achieve inputs at the high end of the range, any of the intermediate options would appear to be feasible. The offensives in Cambodia alone or in MR 1 could be feasible logistically before the end of the 1971-72 dry season. Given the proximity of MR 1 to North Vietnam, offensive activities could probably be undertaken early in the season. To launch an offensive in both MR 1 and Cambodia simultaneously would put greater pressure on the logistic system, and it would probably not be possible until the end of the dry season.

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74. If the inputs into the system are at the low end of the range, none of the intermediate strategies would appear to be feasible very early in the dry season. Again, MR 1 would be an exception because of its proximity to North Vietnam. The timing of offensive activities in Cambodia would depend in large measure on whether a crash program of resupply were undertaken and to what extent existing stockpiles have been depleted.

75. From the manpower point of view, all of the strategic options are within North Vietnamese capabilities. Force augmentations for the intermediate strategies and the maintenance of force levels would require inputs over the next year ranging from 120,000 to 180,000. These forces generally could be in place by early 1972 and much earlier in MR 1. The manpower requirement for a countrywide offensive (including Cambodia) are so large and the prospects of heavy losses so great that we estimate Hanoi would be unwilling to undertake such a commitment.

76. Despite the several options that would be available to Hanoi from the point of view of logistic and manpower considerations, we estimate that the overall course of the war is unlikely to undergo radical changes in the next few months. Hanoi is still bent on outlasting the United States and in South Vietnam is concentrating on the fundamentals of a "people's war" in an effort to correct its present weaknesses. It recognizes the deterioration of its position in South Vietnam since 1968, the difficulties of rebuilding an adequate base to support main force warfare, and the adverse longer term consequences of mounting a major military effort that fails to produce really decisive results.

77. But Hanoi has other options falling well short of a do-or-die military offensive in all of South Vietnam. It can still raise the level of warfare significantly without a proportionate increase in supply and manpower requirements by relying on a high rate of small-scale activity, or it could opt for a major offensive in MR 1. Whether Hanoi would make such a decision depends not only on its logistic capabilities but also on a host of key variables. The conduct and outcome of South Vietnamese elections this year will have some impact on Hanoi's view of

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the war, and we believe the US presidential elections will loom very large in Communist thinking as 1972 approaches.

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APPENDIX

Introduction

The following discussion presents the methodology which has been used to develop numerical appreciations of the enemy's supply requirements to support various military strategies during 1971-72. In general, two historical records have been used to obtain factors for enemy requirements: the 1970 expenditure and ground loss rates in South Vietnam and Laos and the 1968 expenditure and ground loss rates in South Vietnam. Our knowledge of the enemy's requirements in Cambodia is very slight. Consequently, the methodology extrapolates from the South Vietnam experience to arrive at some appreciation of Cambodian expenditures.

Southern Laos

The projected expenditure rates for southern Laos for the 1971-72 dry season are based on the 1970-71 Pre-Lam Son dry season experience. The expenditure rates for the 1972 wet season are essentially those of the 1970 wet season. The following tabulation present these factors.

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1971/72 Dry Season (240 Days)

	<u>Short Tons</u>	
	<u>Daily</u>	<u>Cumulative</u>
Class I	46 X (240)	11,040
Classes II & IV	12 X (240)	2,880
Class III	46 X (240)	11,040
Class V	16 X (240)	3,840
<i>Total</i>	<i>120 X (240)</i>	<i>28,800</i>
<i>Total with 25% bomb damage (BDA)</i>	<i>150 X (240)</i>	<i>36,000</i>

1972 Wet Season (120 Days)

Class I	46 X (120)	5,520
Classes II & IV	12 X (120)	1,440
Class III	9 X (120)	1,080
Class V	3 X (120)	360
<i>Total</i>	<i>70 X (120)</i>	<i>8,400</i>
<i>Total with 25% BDA</i>	<i>87.5 X (120)</i>	<i>10,500</i>

South Vietnam and Cambodia

Four classes of externally procured supplies are considered in all the following models: food (Class I); weapons and equipment (Classes II and IV) and ammunition (Class V). All Military Regions of South Vietnam and Cambodia have a requirement for Classes II, IV and V. Only South Vietnam's MR 1 is assigned a Class I requirement, food for the other regions being supplied by other than the logisticw channel from North Vietnam.

Model One: Minimum Requirement for Forces  
in South Vietnam and Cambodia

		<u>Short Tons</u>	
		<u>Daily</u>	<u>Cumulative</u>
MR 1	Class I	24 (365)	8,760
	Classes II, IV, V	5 (365)	1,825
MR 2	Classes II, IV, V	2 (365)	730
MR 3	Classes II, IV, V	5 (365)	1,825
MR 4	Classes II, IV, V	2 (365)	730
Cambodia	Classes II, IV, V	6 (365)	2,190
<i>Total</i>		<i>44 (365)</i>	<i>16,060</i>
<i>Total with 25% BDA</i>			<i>20,100</i>

Model Two: Requirement for Forces  
in South Vietnam and Cambodia  
to Prepare for General Offensives\*

		Short Tons	
		Daily	Cumulative
MR 1	Class I		
	(low combat)	24 (180)	4,320
	(buildup)	25x1.5 (180)-	
		25x2.0 (180)	6,750- 9,000
	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5 (180)	900
	(buildup)	14x1.5 (180)-	
		14x2.0 (180)	3,780- 5,040
MR 2	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2 (180)	360
	(buildup)	4x1.5 (180)-	
		4x2.0 (180)	1,080- 1,440
MR 3	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5 (180)	900
	(buildup)	7x1.5 (180)-	
		7x2.0 (180)	1,890- 2,520
MR 4	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2 (180)	360
	(buildup)	3x1.5 (180)-	
		3x2.0 (180)	810- 1,080
Cambodia	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	6 (180)	1,080
	(buildup)	16x1.5 (180)-	
		16x2.0 (180)	4,320- 5,760
<i>Total</i>			26,550-32,760
<i>Total with 25% BDA</i>			33,187-40,950

\* Buildup for a sustained (six months) high level of combat was developed analytically by applying a range of [footnote continues on p. A-5]

Model Three: Requirement for High Level of Combat  
in Cambodia, Minimum Requirement Elsewhere

		Short Tons		
		Daily		Cumulative
MR 1	Class I (low combat)	24	(360)	8,640
	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5	(360)	1,800
MR 2	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2	(360)	720
MR 3	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5	(360)	1,800
MR 4	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2	(360)	720
Cambodia	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	6	(180)	1,080
	(buildup)	16x1.5 (180)- 16x2.0 (180)		4,320- 5,760
Total				19,080-20,520
Total with 25% BDA				23,850-25,650

factors 1.5-2.0 to the average daily enemy requirements (consumption and ground losses) during 1968, then multiplying this by 180 days. The stockpiling factors are consistent with those derived from an analysis of the data available on base area deployment of supplies shipped to the enemy forces via the port of Sihanoukville during 1966-69 and conforms to our understanding of enemy stockpiling practice. The stockpile buildups represented by the 1.5-2.0 factor was considered also to reflect the accumulation of sufficient supplies to maintain a low level of enemy activity during the time that the buildup was taking place.

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Model Four: Requirement for High Level of Combat  
in MR 1, Minimum Requirement Elsewhere.

		Short Tons	
		Daily	Cumulative
MR 1	Class I		
	(low combat)	24 (180)	4,320
	(buildup)	25x1.5 (180) - 25x2.0 (180)	6,750- 9,000
	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5 (180)	900
	(buildup)	14x1.5 (180) - 14x2.0 (180)	3,780- 5,040
MR 2	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2 (360)	720
MR 3	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5 (360)	1,800
MR 4	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2 (360)	720
Cambodia	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	6 (360)	2,160
<i>Total</i>			21,150-24,660
<i>Total with 25% BDA</i>			26,437-30,825

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Model Five: Requirement for High Level of Combat  
in MR 1 and in Cambodia, Minimum Requirement  
Elsewhere

		<u>Short Tons</u>	
		<u>Daily</u>	<u>Cumulative</u>
MR 1	Class I (low combat)	24 (180)	4,320
	(buildup)	25x1.5 (180)- 25x2.0 (180)	6,750- 9,000
	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5 (180)	900
	(buildup)	14x1.5 (180)- 14x2.0 (180)	3,780-5,040
MR 2	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2 (360)	720
MR 3	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	5 (360)	1,800
MR 4	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	2 (360)	720
Cambodia	Classes II, IV, V (low combat)	6 (180)	1,080
	(buildup)	16x1.5 (180)- 16x2.0 (180)	4,320- 5,760
<i>Total</i>			<i>24,390-29,340</i>
<i>Total with 25% BDA</i>			<i>30,487-36,675</i>

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